



# IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

## Mental Health Information Sharing Program

January 2017

### Mentally Ill Offender Reentry: A Critical Issue

About 33% of those incarcerated in Iowa prisons have a serious mental illness, and another 24% have some other chronic mental health diagnosis. Iowa data shows offenders with mental health diagnoses are more likely to return to prison.

The barriers separating mental health treatment providers from the criminal justice system have largely remained. As a result, offender treatment is not as effective as it could otherwise be.

Specific areas of concern include:

- Corrections and mental health treatment providers not knowing which medications that incoming offenders with a mental illness are taking or should be taking. The result is delays in treating offenders while new medication assessments are made.
- Duplication of patient screenings and assessments. These are costly and time consuming.

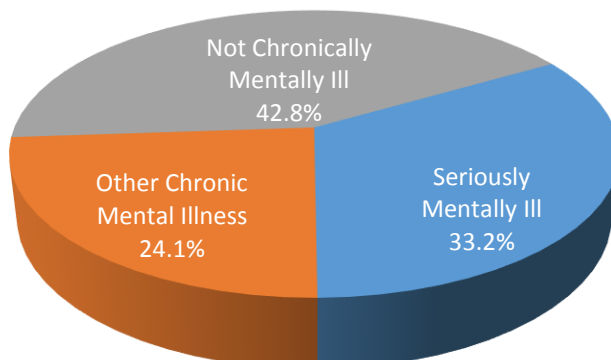
### Commitment to a Solution: Information Sharing

Eyerly-Ball Community Mental Health in Polk County provides services to many offenders returning to the Des Moines area. IDOC and Eyerly-Ball have collaborated in a technical solution grant awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

### At a glance...

- 57% of those incarcerated in Iowa prisons have a chronic mental health diagnosis.
- Offenders with mental health diagnoses are more likely to return to prison.
- IDOC and Eyerly-Ball want to bridge the gap between an offender's treatment in the community and prison.

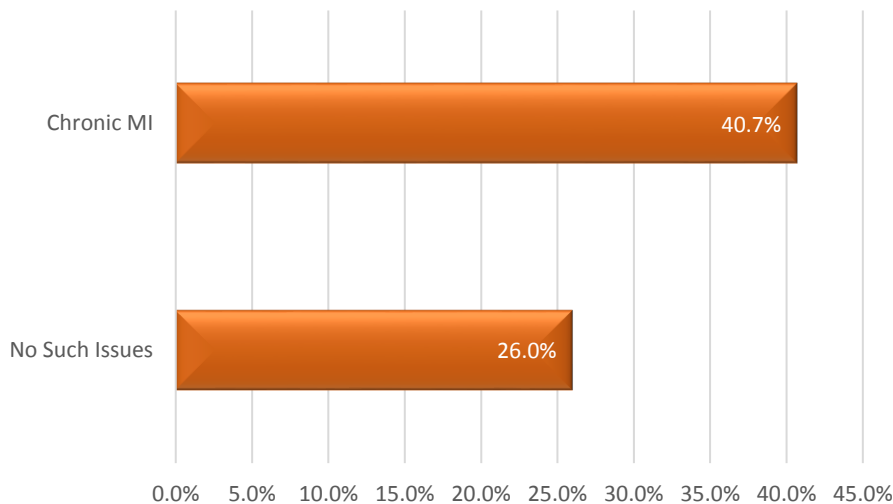
Prison Population on June 30, 2016



*"Overcoming barriers to sharing offender mental health treatment information is critical to continuity of care. What is happening in Iowa could serve as a model for other states."*

*--Jerry Bartruff  
IDOC Director*

Return Rates to Prison within 3 Years:  
Those with Chronic MI Diagnosis vs. No Such Issues



**Offenders with chronic mental health diagnoses are more likely to return to prison.**

Iowa data shown at the left is for the FY2016 recidivism reporting year.

## What is Serious Mental Illness?

The IDOC defines serious mental illness as chronic and persistent mental illnesses in the following categories:

- Schizophrenia
- Recurrent Major Depressive Disorders
- Bipolar Disorders
- Other Chronic and Recurrent Psychosis
- Dementia and other Organic Disorders

## The Mental Health Information Sharing Program: A Cutting-Edge Solution

**Goal:** To reduce costly and time-consuming duplication of patient screenings and assessments, and delays in appropriate treatment protocols, by bridging the gap between community mental health providers and corrections for offenders transferring between prison and the community.

**The Solution:** A two-way exchange between IDOC and Eyerly-Ball's medical databases securely and automatically shares a Continuity of Care Document containing diagnosis, medication, assessment and testing information. The solution went live in November 2016.

**Benefits:** Helps eliminate duplication of work, reduces waiting time for information, and expedites an offender's treatment including provision of potentially critical medication. While the exchange is currently between IDOC and Eyerly-Ball, there is the potential to expand to other community mental health providers in Iowa.

**Addressing HIPAA Requirements:** Perhaps the most difficult aspect of this project was work on the legal side to establish protocols for sharing this critical information that would meet all HIPAA requirements.

**How the Exchange Works:** If a person admitted to prison indicates they have received services from Eyerly-Ball, a process is initiated to sign a release of information using an electronic signature pad. Once the release is signed, a secure exchange from the IDOC medical database to Eyerly-Ball's medical database is initiated to request an offender's medical information, requiring no human interaction. When the system finds a patient match, it automatically sends back the Continuity of Care Document, which updates the IDOC medical database. The same process works if Eyerly-Ball is making the request to IDOC. If no match is found, the secure message goes to an inbox to be researched by staff. The process ensures correct identification of the offender and proper release of information.